A Way with Poetry

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Preface

A six-year experience in teaching poetry has made the compilation of this book a true necessity. Students have often complained about the difficulty of the subject of poetry. But we know that it is not so much the *difficulty* of the subject as the *incapacity* of students to handle a set of new terms and concepts in an analytical way.

The students come from different educational backgrounds. The variety of educational backgrounds amounts to basic differences in the cultural makeup of each student, one of the lamentable facts of our educational systems which has become a factor of dissipation rather than integration. The significance of this for a teacher is easy to see: the teacher draws on what he expects to be the students' knowledge to bring the new concepts and terminology home. When the background is manifold, the task becomes daunting.

Moreover, by focusing on learning by rote, rather than developing the student's aesthetic and analytical faculties, pre-university education puts the teacher at a disadvantage.

Another counterproductive factor is the enrollment, due to various political and socio-economic factors, of an unmanageable number of students in some language departments.

A college library would help if it were capable of providing for the needs of a big number of students, but college libraries are generally inefficient in this respect because of poor resources and unprofessional management.

A book like the present one becomes a necessity, almost an inevitability, though eventually a modest step on the way to a workable poetry course.

The material in the book is authentic. References to a few sources have been made where not the most general kind of knowledge is used. A small portion of online material has been incorporated providing some biographical information on W. B. Yeats. This should provide a practical lesson to students on how to use the internet in a situation where more solid material is lacking.

Finally, I hope the students will find this book both useful and enjoyable.

Part One

How to Deal with a Poem

Appreciation of a Poem

The following are ideas that can help you talk about the poem in a more material, less impressionistic way. However, they do not exhaust the different possibilities of how you can look into a poem.

Part I: General

1- State the theme and/or the tone and/ or the basic situation in the poem. Statement of one or all of these elements will help to direct you in your analysis.

2- State the general form the poem. Is it a sonnet or simply any kind of strophic (consisting of stanzas?) Is it a stitchic poem (consisting of lines following each other with no division into stanzas?) What kind of meter and rhyme scheme does the poem have? Is the formal organization justified by the content? In other words, in what way(s) does the form correspond to the content?

3- How can this correspondence be a criterion of evaluation?

Part II: Specific

The basic question that you should try to answer in your analysis is how the theme or the particular effect that the poet wants to produce is realized in the language of the poem.

1- Does the argument exhibit any kind of verbal irony or paradox? To what degree is the poet being intentionally or unintentionally ironical or paradoxical?

2- What kind of imagery does the poet use: simile, metaphor, metonymy, and analogy? Does this have anything to do with the theme, the state of mind or the tone of the poet or the effect that he wants to produce?

3- What kind of sensory perception does the poet appeal to through his use of imagery and choice of vocabulary: visual (appealing to the eye), aural (appealing to the ear), tactile (appealing to the fingers), olfactory (smelling) or gustatory (taste).

4- How does the meter, especially metrical variation, influence the argument, emotion or tone of the poem?

5- Is the imagery traditional or innovative?

6- In what way is the choice of vocabulary significant? How does the diction affect the atmosphere of the poem depending on the connotative power of words?

7- How does the manipulation of syntax influence the poem?

8- How does the manipulation of sound influence the poem?

9- What other devices does the poet use and how do they affect the poem?

Chapter One

Types of Poetry

Poetry can be classified into three main types: lyric, narrative and dramatic.

I. The Lyric

The most common of these types is the lyric. The lyric was identified by Greek writers as a song rendered to the accompaniment of a lyre. The term is now used for any fairly short, non-narrative poem presenting a single speaker who expresses a state of mind or a process of thought and feeling. Lyric speakers may be thinking in solitude.

Although the lyric is uttered in the first person, we should be wary about identifying the "I" in the poem with the poets themselves. In some lyrics such Milton's sonnet "On His Blindness", the relation to the known circumstances of the author's life invites us to read the poem as the personal utterance of the writer. In many lyrics the speaker is an invented character, and one who may be very different from the actual poet.

Lyrics differ in degree of complexity; some lyric poems may simply be brief expressions of a mood or state of feeling, such as Hopkins' "Heaven-Haven":

> I have desired to go
> Where springs not fail,
> To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
> And a few lilies blow.
> And I have asked to be
> Where no storms come,

Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,

And out of the swing of the sea.

A lyric may also be an extended expression of a complex development of thought, such as in long elegies, like that of Thomas Gray, and in odes, such as those of John Keats.

The lyric is a general term comprising several subclasses such as the sonnet, the ode, the elegy and the dramatic monologue.

The Sonnet

The sonnet is a lyric poem of 14 lines. The sonnet is one of the most popular forms in English poetry. It was particularly popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The sonnet fell out of favour with the Augustans in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, but made headway again with the Romantics in the nineteenth century. Introduced in English poetry by Thomas Wyatt and developed further by the Earl of Surrey, the sonnet attracted the attention of the most impressive names of the Elizabethan age. Several of them wrote sonnet sequences or cycles. A sonnet cycle is a collection of sonnets on more or less the same theme. Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, Samuel Daniel and Drayton – all wrote sonnet cycles. The most popular theme in the sonnet was that of love in its various manifestations.

There are basically three types of sonnet in English poetry: the Petrarchan or Italian, the Shakespearean or English and the Spenserian. Other varieties such as Hopkins' "curtail(ed) sonnet"

made their appearances but failed to gain the same popularity that the other varieties achieved.

The following lines give a brief idea about each of these sonnet forms. The section on strophic and stichic organization in Chapter Three gives a more detailed treatment of the implications of each form.

THE PETRARCHAN SONNET takes its name from the Italian renaissance poet Petracrch. It was introduced into English poetry by Thomas Wyatt. It was also used by such great poets as Donne, Milton, Wordsworth and Hopkins. Its fourteen lines are divided into an octave of eight lines and a sestet of six lines, given the rhyme scheme abbaabba, cde cde, respectively. Variations have made to the sestet to make it cdcdcd or, to effect a stronger closure, cdcdee.

We express its structure by statging its rhyme scheme whichis abbbaabba cde cde.

THE SHAKESPEAREAN SONNET was obviously the form used by William Shakespeare. It is more generally known as the English sonnet since it was developed in England by the Earl of Surrey. The fourteen lines of the English sonnet have a four-part structure, three quatrains and a couplet rhyming abab, cdcd, efef, gg.

THE SPENSERIAN SONNET can be seen as a variation on the English sonnet. It was developed by the Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser. It maintains the four-part structure of the Shakespearean sonnet but seeks to tie the three quatrains through the repetition of the

last rhyme in one quatrain at the beginning of the next. So it takes the rhyme scheme abab bcbc cdcd ee.

Elegy

The original Greek term refers to any poem written in elegiac meter (alternating pentameter and hexameter lines), and to denote the subjects and moods frequently expressed in that verse, especially complaints about love. Through the renaissance the word continued to have a variable usage. Donne's elegies for example are love poems. The term started to settle to its present sense in the 17th century. Now it indicates a formal and sustained lament for the death of a particular person. Examples are Tennyson's *In Memoriam* on the death of Arthur Hallam and Shelley's elegy on the death of Keats.

Many elegies have a pastoral setting. In the **pastoral elegy** both the poet and the person lamented are characterized as shepherds. Originally started by the Greek poet Theocritus and taken up by the Roman Virgil, it was adopted by Milton in *Lycidas* and by Shelley in *Adonais*. Some of the conventions of the pastoral elegy are:

1- The speaker begins by invoking the muses, and goes on to evoke other figures from classical mythology.
2- All nature joins in mourning the shepherd's death. The mourner charges with negligence the nymphs or other guardians of the dead shepherd.
3- There is a procession of appropriate mourners.
4- The poet raises questions about the justice of divine providence, and talks of the corrupt conditions of his own time.

5- There is a closing consolation. In Christian elegies, the poem moves from grief and despair to joy and assurance as the elegist discovers that death is only a step on the way to eternal life.

As far as this course is concerned, there are two major ways of looking at Auden's poem. This obviously means that the two ways do not necessarily exhaust the possibilities of reading In Memory of Yeats. Thus we may look at Auden's poem as a modernization of the form of the elegy. We may also look at it from the point of view of its form.

Initially the poem deals with the death of a great poet (include two items by Yeats and Milton please), W.B Yeats, probably Ireland's greatest poet ever.

Since this poem deals with the death of a contemporary figure, we may well cite some facts about his life that will help orient the reader as to some of Auden's references in the poem.

The following comments are from Rex Maddox's review in the Globe of *YEATS'S GHOSTS: The Secret Life of W. B. Yeats* By Brenda Maddox.

Auden writes: "Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry." In funeral tributes, as Dr. Johnson remarked, we are not under oath, and while we may kindly oblige the idea that Ireland is "mad" (sometimes), that she "hurt" Yeats into his poetry is both too easy and over- sentimental. But Auden is right more often than he is not. We can have no

reservations on another line of the elegy, certainly not on its operative adjective: "You were silly like us."

Yeats was indeed very silly at times. And nowhere more so than in his long dalliance with spiritualism and automatic writing. He had an ungovernable appetite for slushy mysticism and communication with the "other side."

Yeats's Ghosts, by British journalist and award-winning biographer (Nora Joyce, D. H. Lawrence) Brenda Maddox, is the very book for people who want to know just how silly Yeats was. While it is not new to most people that Yeats gave himself over to traffic with spooks and phantom penmen, Yeats's Ghosts moves us to an almost sad awe in its manifest of just how thick (both senses) that traffic was.

In a way, it all started with Maud Gonne. Dante had his Beatrice, Petrarch his Laura, and Yeats -- Maud Gonne. Yeats worshipped and lusted after Maud for the better part of 25 years. She was a turbulent figure in the Irish Wars, a striking beauty, platform orator and icon. For the most part, Maud accepted the worship and rejected the lust. Out of her inaccessibility, Yeats made many first-class poems. He proposed to her with regularity, and she, with equal regularity, rejected him.

In the comedy, high and low, of the Yeatsian quest for carnal companions, Yeats's Ghosts is replete and meticulous. The silliness begins when, after half a life's pursuit of Maud and one final proposal of marriage rejected, Yeats fixes on her daughter Iseult. He proposes to Iseult. And she turns him down. Evidently getting turned down by

both mother and daughter, instead of killing the impulse, turned Yeats into a marriage-proposing machine.

As recounted by Maddox, within weeks of that double whammy, Yeats makes a third proposal, to 24-year-old Georgie Hyde Lees. Interestingly, Yeats met Georgie through their mutual membership of the mystico-spiritual association, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. She accepts. In Maddox's phrase, Georgie got the poet "on the rebound."

Such is the soap-opera-marriage career of Ireland's greatest poet. Like all soap operas, it moves unbendingly to ridiculous excess and manic stratagem. Georgie soon learns she's only second, or third, choice. Yeats is writing to Iseult on their (Georgie's and Yeats's) honeymoon. The marriage bed is cool. It is at this point that Georgie reveals her truly formidable powers of spirit communication and automatic writing. She is a one-woman word processor for the other side. For Yeats, this is a bonanza. And, in its curious way, Georgie's spiritual gifts had their very carnal payoff. It invigorated the marriage. The question asked, and I think mainly answered in the affirmative by Maddox, is whether Georgie faked the whole business to keep Yeats's attention and save the union.

Source: http://www.cbc.ca/checkup/yates1.html

Departure from the traditional elegy

On the contrary in Auden's elegy the objects of nature are shown to be completely unaware of Yeats' death. In fact the first section

seems to be a critique of the pastoral elegiac conventions. Moreover, nature which is evoked in the first stanza is pervaded with urban images. The airport, the statues, the fashionable quays. It is not all the objects of nature, which agree that the day of Yeats' death was a dark, cold day; it is *all the instruments* this time. Auden's manner carries not only a touch of realism in its handling of the setting, it also carries that touch with regards to the glorification and idealization of the poet: "O all the instruments we have agree ..."

In terms of form, the poem departs from the traditional elegy by its experimentation with form. Experimentation is by definition untraditional.

The poem uses three verse forms: free verse, blank verse and traditional verse. We can observe that the form becomes more formal and more traditional as the poet's handling of Yeats changes. The first section, written in free verse has the poet trying to make sense of the poet's death. His tone is tentative, his ideas are not final. Free verse seems to fit since it is a more open form.

The second section, written in blank verse, shows a more certain tone. Auden addresses Yeats directly whereas in the first section, Yeats is referred to in the third person. Despite the fact that the section begins with a rather shocking statement about Yeats "You were silly like us", the rest of the section gives Yeats some of his due by exalting his poetry over his personal silliness.

The last section, with its galloping rhythm written in meter and rhyme, fits with the poet's categorical assertions about Yeats, the role

of poetry in life and the poetry's ability to conquer time "bending sickle". There is a more formal tone couched in neater, more closed form. So we can trace a progress of form from modern to traditional, from free to closed. Parallel to this development of the form, there is the progress from trying to understand to showing some convictions about Yeats to statements with sweeping certainty in the last section. The poem, in the modulation of its form remains faithful to the principle of correspondence between form and content.

The Ode

A lyric poem, usually of some length. The main features are an elaborate stanza-structure, a marked formality and stateliness in tone and style (which make it ceremonious), and lofty sentiments and thoughts. In short, an ode is rather a grand poem; a full-dress poem. However, we can distinguish two basic kinds: the public, which is used for ceremonial occasions, like funerals, birthdays, state events; the private often celebrates rather intense personal and subjective occasions; it is inclined to be meditative and reflective. Tennyson's "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington" is an example of the former; Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale", an example of the latter.

We can further divide the ode into two kinds: the **Pindaric ode** and the **Horatian ode** which roughly correspond to the two divisions above: Pindaric odes are modeled on the songs by he Chorus in drama. Pindar's complex stanzas were patterned in sets of three: moving in dance rhythm to the left, the Chorus sang the *strophe* (the first part of the ode), moving to the right, the antistrophe; then

standing still, the epode. Descending from Pindar, the English developed two kinds of ode, the regular one, which repeats with all the strophes and antistrophes in one stanza pattern and all the epodes (or stands) in another pattern. The irregular ode, introduced by Abraham Cowley disregarded the recurrent strophic triad (three-part division) allowing each stanza to establish its own pattern of varying line lengths, number of lines and rhyme scheme.

The Horatian ode was originally modeled on the matter, tone and form of the odes of the Roman Horace. In contrast to the passion and visionary boldness of Pindar's odes, Horatian odes are calmer, more meditative and restrained. They also repeat the same stanza pattern with the same line lengths. "Marvell's an Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" and Keats' "To Autumn" are notable examples.

Keats odes are the generally considered the most successful and popular odes in the language.

II. Narrative Poetry

A narrative poem is simply a poem that tells a story. It can take many forms and styles, both complex and simple, brief or elaborate, as long as it tells a story. Epics, ballads, and metrical romances are types of the narrative poem. Narrative poetry dates back to the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh and Homer's epics the Iliad and the Odyssey. In England and Scotland, storytelling poems have long been popular; in the late Middle Ages, ballads-or storytelling songs-circulated widely. The art of narrative poetry requires the author to possess the skills of a writer of fiction, the ability to draw characters and settings briefly, to

engage attention, and to shape a plot, while maintaining all the skills of a poet.

The epic

The epic or the heroic poem is a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject related in an elevated style and centered on a heroic figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation or the human race. Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are two very famous example of the 'traditional epic' whose subject matter and events are driven from historical and legendary materials which had developed in the oral traditions of the poet's peoples during a period of warfare. Later epics were written in imitation of the traditional epic by sophisticated craftsmen. Virgil's *The Aeneid* is an example.

The Ballad

A ballad is a short poem that tells a simple story and has a repeated refrain. Ballads were originally intended to be sung. Early ballads, known as folk ballads, were passed down through generations, so their authors are often unknown. The ballad occurs in very early literature in nearly every nation. Therefore, in addition to being entertaining, ballads can help us to understand a given culture by showing us what values or norms that culture deemed important. Later ballads were composed by known authors and are known as 'literary ballads'. An example of an anonymous folk ballad is "Edward," which dates from the Middle Ages. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and John Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci" are examples of literary ballads. Folk ballads are more primitive poems.

Literary ballads are often sophisticated achievements. The differences between the two varieties reflect the simplicity of the former and the complexity of the latter

Common characteristics of the ballad:

1- The beginning is often abrupt.
2- The language is simple.
3- The theme is often tragic.
4- There is often a refrain.
5- Imagery is sparse and simple.
6- There is a strong dramatic element: The story is told through dialogue and action and there is considerable intensity and immediacy.
7- A ballad usually deals with a single episode.
8- The events leading to the crisis are related swiftly.
9- There is minimal detail of surroundings.
10- The narrator is impersonal.
11- Stock, well-tried epithets are used in the oral tradition.
12- There is frequently incremental repetition.
13- The single line of action and the speed of the story preclude much attempt at delineation of character.

Questions on La Belle Dame sans Merci and Lord Randal:

1- The difference between Keats' literary ballad and Lord Randal is that between simplicity and sophistication. Elaborate.
2- The differences between La Belle Dame Sans Merci and Lord Randal do not mean they have nothing in common. Discuss.

3- An attentive reading of Lord can still bear some fruit despite its primitive simplicity.

Questions on La Belle Dame sans Merci

The first set of questions should help you write a well-rounded essay on the poem.

1- What is the basic situation in the poem?

The question on the basic situation of the poem takes care of the fact it is not always easy to express your initial thoughts about the content of a poem in terms of 'theme'. That happens in narrative poetry in particular where no *argument* is necessarily involved. You may also want to elaborate on the tone of the poem as part of the introductory part on the content (basic situation, theme, tone).

What is the general form of the poem?

An answer to this question should handle its stanzaic structure, the rhyme scheme of a representative stanza, and a statement about dominant meter in the poem.

What follows may deceptively seem to be a line by line analysis of the poem. However, if you examine the analysis carefully, you will observe attempts to make generalizations about chunks of text. Basically we can count two kinds of generalization: generalizations about the content that are supported by illustrations from technical analysis, and/or generalizations about form that have some connection to what the whole poem or part of it says.

The poem, La Belle Dame sans Merci is written in four-line stanzas, also known as quatrains. The dominant meter is iambic tetrameter. The last line in each stanza is a dimeter.

The poem begins with a trochee.

O What can **ail** thee **knight**-at-**arms**

The inversion to a trochee from the iambic or more generally, the inversion of foot at the beginning of line is a common phenomenon in English poetry. It serves to introduce new speakers in the poem or to direct the reader's/ listener's attention to something that occurs at the beginning of the poem. If the first speaker wants to alert the knight, to attract his attention to the conversation he is trying to start with him, the first word may have to be stressed. So in this position trochees are frequent.

In the second line we have a last promoted syllable that completes the iambic foot (loiter**ing**). A promoted syllable is one that would usually be slack. A demoted syllable is one that would usually be strong. Demotion and promotion are kinds of poetic licence. The apostrophe (') in 'wither'd' means that no extra syllable will be uttered at the end of the word (perhaps words like this one were pronounced with an extra syllable for 'ed' at that time). The last line is a dimeter. It is also an iam**b** followed by a spondee.

The emphasis here is on the fact that positive aspects of nature that might be keeping the knight on the hill are no longer there since this is winter time. The device is a usual one with Keats; rather than inverting and using strong beats at the beginning of lines, he prefers to keep them for the end of the stanza. In its brevity, the last line carries a decisiveness bringing the experience to a close. It marks some of the most important moments in the poem: "And sure in language strange

she said/ I love thee true." The fact of its brevity coupled with its importance makes for some irony. The irony is tragic. It carries a sense of conclusiveness that only turns out to be an illusion with the discoveries the poet makes at the last moments of his encounter with the fairy.

We cannot possibly force meaning on each and every metrical variation, nor can we do that with alliteration or assonance. Sometimes metrical variation are necessary in order not to sacrifice the meaning or the natural flow of the lines in favour of an outward musicality which may be nice for the ear but detrimental to the value of the poem as "a statement in words about a human experience" (Yvor Winters' definition) There are many metrical variations that seem not to express or imitate anything rather than the simplicity and natural fluidity of the conversation. The last line always carries the most important part in the stanza. The fact that the eyes are wild seems to point to the reality that will be discovered later—that the poet will eventually be deceived by the fairy. It actually tells us about the nature of that creature. The same thing is done again in the next stanza where we are told that the song is actually a fairy's song. The next three last lines exhibit climactic moments in the couple's relationship: the moaning (a sign of pleasure) the confession by the fairy that she is in love with the man, and the kissing to sleep which exhibits the speaker's loving affection. The stanza after the next one confirms this as it carries the ultimate revelation of the deceiving nature of the fairy and the desperate situation of the speaker.

The poem is perfect in its structure. The division into stanzas which should justify itself in accordance with the progress of the meaning, is accomplished almost beyond improvement (in George Saintusbury's opinion). The stanzas advance the action and no stanza seems redundant or lacking in rationale. The division into stanzas means that the stanzas have to justify their existence and if they do not do that, they are not justified. One criterion is judging the structure of the poem to merit or finding fault with it is whether the bears out the form.

In order for you to make a fuller analysis, you may want to contemplate the following points:

1- possible parallels between the knight and the setting as the other speaker gives it in the first two stanzas.

III. Dramatic poetry

A clear-cut definition of dramatic poetry is harder to find than that of lyric or narrative poetry. If we roughly define lyric poetry as that which expresses personal emotion, narrative poetry as that which tells a story, then we may say that **dramatic poetry represents an enactment, an acting out, in other words, roles and characters.**

To speak more elaborately, Western critics have interpreted the phrase 'dramatic poetry' in three main ways: 1) short poems that imply a dramatic scene, with characters, talk and action; 2) plays that are praised as poetic; 3) dramas, plays, whose dialogue is 'rhythmed', i.e., using metre and with shape of the lines looking like verse, not prose.

Of these, the first is the one more relevant here. The presence of characters, conversation, even with an implied auditor, action and conflict, resulting in an immediacy present to our perception and an intensity of atmosphere, are probably the hallmarks of dramatic poetry as we mean to use here. As such, dramatic poetry can characterize a lyric or narrative poem. In other words, poetry that is described as dramatic does not exist as an autonomous kind of poetry in this sense, though it does in the third sense and partly in the second.

Thomas Wyatt's sonnet "Whoso list to Hunt" is a lyric poem because it is a sonnet that records the speaker's feelings about a certain experience. Yet it is highly dramatic.

Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
But as for me, *hélas*, I may no more.
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
I am of them that farthest cometh behind.
Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore
Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,
Sithens in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I may spend his time in vain.
And graven with diamonds in letters plain
There is written, her fair neck round about:
Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am,
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.

The poet addresses some people (real, hypothetical or imagined) who may be interested in catching the dear. There is a conflict inside the poet between his mental conviction that the attempt to catch the dear is bound to fail that leads to a conscious decision to quit the chase on the one hand, and his emotional attachment to her which leads to an involuntary physical response as he sees her run nearby. The dear then speaks of the limits of an approach to it.

The use of the present tense verbs (fleeth, fainting, follow, leave off, seek to hold the wind) coupled with the fact that indicate movement, endow the action with an immediacy (things are immediately present to us and happen before our eyes) that is characteristic of true drama. Indeed the whole poem offers us a scene where the action takes place, a testimony for the dramatic quality of the poem.

Chapter Two

Structure and Form



I. Verse Forms

The basic distinction between poetry and verse is that the word verse refers more specifically to those formal elements that together make a written text sound or look different from prose. Those formal elements include meter, in case the poem is metrical, rhyme and the shape of the text on paper. If the lines are so shaped and arranged to look like verse and not like prose, then this is verse.

Poetry is a more complex concept, comprising those elements and others, such as the emotional aspect and imagery. Scientific treatises that take the shape of poems are not real poetry, but they are versifications of those scientific facts that a scientist may want to record in a way that is easy to remember.

Verse forms include traditional rhymed metrical poetry, blank verse, which is metrical but not rhymed, and free verse which is neither metrical nor rhymed but looks like a poem on paper.

The divisions of units in traditional verse is into couplets and stanzas and in some cases the line stands by itself as the formal unit in the poem and not the couplet or the stanza.

Blank verse usually uses the iambic pentameter line, that is, five feet of ten syllables, with the first syllable in the feet being a slack or weak one and the second is a strong one. Blank verse is the closest of metrical forms to the rhythms of natural English speech. As a result it became the dominant verse form used in poetic drama, specially in the Elizabethan age. The divisions of blank verse are called verse paragraphs and they are not equal in length. They follow the meaning

and, in drama, the situation, to determine their length. The dominant division in metrical verse is the stanza.

The last of these three forms is **free verse,** which is more open than blank verse, in the sense that it is less restricted by formal rules of meter. It is supposedly more adaptable to freer modes of expression than traditional rhymed verse and blank verse. But this does not mean that free verse is not rhythmical. Its rhythm does not depend on metrical rules but on the utilization of parallelism of phrases and clauses, repetition and on the utilization of pauses and enjambment.

II. Structure

English poetry, unlike traditional Arabic poetry, has different ways of organizing its structure. There are basically two kinds of organization: stichic (from stichos or line), and strophic (from strophe or stanza, or in free verse, a unit or verse paragraph). Stichic poetry has lines following each other without groups of lines forming symmetrical or equal units (stanzas). This is the kind of poetry employed in Milton's "Paradise Lost", for instance:

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heav'ns and earth
Rose out of Chaos

Strophic organization into stanzas is that which we perceive in "Lord Randal", "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and many other poems. A stanza is a group of lines of verse in a poem that contains other groups or stanzas. In the ideal situation a stanza will justify itself the way a paragraph justifies itself in an essay. This means that the stanza must tell something that justifies its separation from the other lines in the poem. The white space that separates stanzas should signify the difference in between the ideas or images of each stanza. If the stanza has no reason to exist as an independent unit of the poem, then the structure of the poem is flawed.

III. Meter

A major feature of poetry is that has rhythm. But rhythm is not a specifically poetic quality. Prose too can have rhythm. Yet rhythm in this case is more a matter of manipulation of syntax and devices such as alliteration or assonance than of anything else.

Rhythm in poetry is a more complex matter, if only because poetry is traditionally written in meter. Some poetry does not use meter, yet is rhythmical. In that case there is the syntax and sound parts played off against line length.

But what is meter?

Let's first begin by reminding the reader that the word rhythm is originally a musical term. Yet to talk about rhythm in poetry is not a metaphor. Both music and poetry are temporal arts which means they happen in time and they shape themselves against spans of time. The significance of this becomes clear when we realize that other arts –

painting and sculpture-- are spatial in character. This means that they shape themselves in space.

Since poetry and music create their 'shapes' by utilizing sound against time or in time, we would expect that the processes of their creation of rhythm are similar. The specifically musical element in poetry is meter. Basically, meter is repetition of sound at equal intervals. But what kind of sound?

Different poetries of different languages have developed different systems of utilization of sound. Arabic poetry for instance is quantitative in nature. This means that its utilization of sound takes care of the number of vowels and consonants which occur in the position in each verse (bayt).

English poetry makes use of quantity but couples it with stress pattern. A possible reason for this development is that there is an abundance of vowels in Arabic speech; whereas English speech is marked by the presence of chunks of consonants which makes the distribution of vowels and consants unequal.

This has led to English poetry becoming more lenient with quantities. As a result English depends on the counting of syllables in lines. Each lines will usually have the same number of syllables in traditional verse. But syllables in English vary in length. The word 'text' /tekst/ is one syllable. 'A' in 'a man' is also a syllable. So the English give extra strength to their rhythm by utilizing 'stress'. English speech is wavy in nature and stress plays an important part in

shaping speech. We can with some justification say that Arabic pays less attention to stress.

Four word classes in English receive stress in habitual linguistic behaviour: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Pronouns are frequently border-line cases. Other word classes are usually weak which means they do not receive stressing. Stress is the force exerted by the lungs and the vocal chords in the pronunciation of one syllable.

What this comes to is that traditional English poetry takes care of two linguistic phenomena in its creation of meter which is the backbone of rhythm in that kind of poetry: *syllable count* and *stress*. Hence, English poetry is known as accentual-syllabic.

As said earlier, most lines in a poem will have the same number of syllables. They will most often have the same number of stress falling, usually, on the same position.

Look at the following examples for instance

To *be* or *not* to *be*

The italicized words indicate the position of stress or accent. Those syllables that receive stress are called stressed, accented or strong syllables. The syllables that do not receive stress are unstressed, unaccented, weak or slack syllables.

As you can observe the way stress is used creates a pattern in the line: slack + strong (three times). Since we have a pattern of two syllables, we can give each unit a name. The name of this metrical unit is 'the foot'. Therefore, the line that we are dealing with consists of three feet. You can recognize feet when you observe a pattern.

Different patterns take different names and different line lengths (number of feet) take different names too.

The pattern that we have seen is called iambic and it refers that one slack syllable is followed by a strong one. The fact that this happens three times makes this line a trimester (three feet).

Feet

We have different names for different patterns:

1- slack strong iambic

This **bread** I **break** was **once** the **oat** (Dylan Thomas "This bread I break")

One iambic foot is an iamb.

2- strong slack trochaic

Once upon a **mid**night **dreary** (E. A. Poe "The Raven")

one trochaic foot is a trochee.

3- strong strong spondaic

one spondaic foot is a spondee.

4- slack slack pyrrhic

one pyrrhic foot is a pyrrhic.

These last two feet only exist as variations within iambic or trochaic etc lines. Thus there is hardly any complete spondaic or pyrrhic line.

There are two main three-syllable feet:

1- strong slack slack dactylic

One more unfor**t**unate

Weary of **breath** (Thomas Hood "The Bridge of Sighs") (The first foot is a dactyl)

one dactylic foot is a dactyl.

2- slack slack strong anapestic

It was **many** and **many** a **year** **ago** (E. A. Poe "Annabel Lee")

(The first three feet are anapests)

one anapestic foot is an anapest.

Line Length

1-A one-foot line is a monometer

2- a two-foot line is a dimeter

3- a three-foot line is a trimeter

4- a four-foot line is a tetrameter

5- A five-foot line is a pentameter

6- A six-foot line is a hexameter

7- A seven-foot line is a heptameter

8- An eight-foot line is an octometer

Complicated as it looks, the terminology should not distract our attention from the more important job of seeing how the meter fits the meaning. If meter dominates the meaning, the result is doggerel.

The most commonly used line lengths are the pentameter followed by the tetrameter, then the hexameter.

The pentameter line provides an opportunity for a complete 'patch' of meaning without being too heavy or slow. The tetrameter is lighter in movement and together with the other shorter line lengths has a song-like quality. Being the longest of these, it is a semantically more weighty, less musical line than the shorter three ones.

The hexameter for its part begins the long lines which, if not used intelligently may be too heavy.

- How do we read a line metrically/ scan it?

Metrical Variation

Ironically meter becomes more significant when its patterns are broken. This is the phenomenon known as **metrical variation**. It refers to a situation where the foot is reversed or changed from one pattern to another, i.e., from iambic to trochaic

Oh! What can **ail** thee **knight**-at-**arms**

The first syllable is stressed. This is a exclamation intended to attract the listener's attention, so it comes out with some force. This force exerted by the lungs and the vocal chords is what we call stress. The first syllable is strong and the second is slack. The third is slack and the fourth is strong. So far we can divide these into two feet with the first one being a trochee and the second being an iamb. The fifth syllable is slack and the sixth is strong. Thus a pattern begins to appear. The seventh is slack and the eighth is strong. Thus we reach the conclusion that the dominant foot is iambic.

So what are we to make of the first, trochaic, foot?

This is again what we call metrical variation. Metrical variation is justified or even effective when it serves the meaning. In the line quoted from Keats' *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, the reason for the metrical importance is the exclamation intended to attract the knight's attention looking totally distraught because of his shock and sense of total loss.

Now let us examine meter on a larger scale. The subject of our metrical analysis is the same poem by Keats.

> **Ah**, what can **ail** thee, **wretchéd wight**,
> **Alone** and **palely loitering**;
> The **sedge** is **wither**'d from the **lake**,
> And **no birds sing**.

This stanza poses several problems to scansion. English poetry is sometimes infamously problematic in scansion. We have already dealt with the first line when speaking of metrical variation. We may just add that a trochee in the first foot of the poem is not uncommon for reasons similar to the one we cited for it in this poem.

The 'éd' in 'wretchéd' is a syllable. The accent is there in order to indicate that the word is to be pronounced as (retshid). This makes the number of syllables duly eight. The line has four feet and is therefore a tetrameter.

You may wonder why "thee" is slack when it sounds stronger than other weak syllables. The reason is that a syllable derives its strength or weakness from its position in the foot. "Ail" is already strong and so there is no need to pronounce "thee" with any great force. Another question that may arise in this case is why we cannot consider this whole foot a spondee. The answer to this is simple, we cannot pronounce nor consider this a spondee because no urgency of meaning requires it. Thus even if we add force to "thee", there will be something unnatural about the way we pronounce it.

This may all sound too intricate. The best thing to do about it is to develop an intimate relationship with the poems you are studying.

The second line has the problem of the word **"loitering"**. The 'ing' is a grammatical suffix and does not usually receive a stress. However the iambic pattern established and the fact that the final position is a strong one causes a certain inertia by forcing us to read the last syllable with some force.

What do we call this phenomenon? We call it promotion, that is, the accentuation of a syllable that is usually a weak one. The opposite of this term is demotion which is the weakening of a syllable that is usually a strong one.

The next line begins with two iambs followed by what can be scanned as a pyrrhic foot. However if we promote "from", the line would be a perfect iambic tetrameter. That depends on whether you prefer a formal reading or one that corresponds to normal speech. A formal (in this case perhaps too formal) reading takes care to maintain the pattern though this may sound a little bit artificial. A more natural reading of the line would have this foot read as a pyrrhic.

The last line has an initial iamb followed by a spondee.

You need to practice scansion by working on the following lines either alone or with your teacher. Take special care of where the pattern changes since this is the main problem in scansion. Use a pencil and start trying to scan. Reread to check. Once you understand how scansion works there only remains the problem of your pronouncing words correctly. You may look up the problematic words in a dictionary. Also take care of the markings that poets are careful to place on letters indicating how words should be pronounced.

Ah, what can ail thee, wretchéd wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.
I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.
I met a lady in the meads
Full beautiful, a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.
I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long;
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.
I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.
She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew;
And sure in language strange she said,
I love thee true.
She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gaz'd and sighed deep,
And there I shut her wild sad eyes--
So kiss'd to sleep.

And there we slumber'd on the moss,
And there I dream'd, ah woe betide,
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill side.
I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
Who cry'd--"La belle Dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall!"
I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill side.
And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Rhyme

Rhyme in English poetry consists in the use in the last word in the poetic line of the same vowel and the same consonants that may follow that vowel: late – fate; shallow – hollow.

Rhyme in English does not have to be successive. Two rhyming words occurring at the end of two lines could be interrupted by an intervening line where the last word does not agree in sound with the two rhyming words of the two other lines:

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls, to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
"The breath goes now," and some say, "No:"

There are different kinds of rhyme according to the position of the rhyming words and how identical the last vowel sound and the ensuing consonants. Final-position rhyme is called **end rhyme**; **internal rhyme** occur within a verse line, as in Hopkins' "God's Grandeur":

And all is *seared* with trade, *bleared, smeared* with toil

and in "Spring and Fall":

By and *by*, nor spare a *sigh*

In terms of identicalness of sound, there are three kinds: full rhyme, which is the traditionally normal type, as in Shakespeare's Sonnet 55

So till the judgment that yourself arise
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes

Half or imperfect rhyme, also known as 'partial', 'near' or 'slant' rhyme is that type of rhyme in which the vowels are either approximate or quite different but maintaining some similarity through the use of similar consonants. Observe how Wilfred Owen uses two sets of half rhymes in the following stanza. The first set is marked by the use of italics; the second by bold letters:

The centuries will burn rich *loads*
With which we **groaned,**
Whose warmth shall lull their dreamy *lids*,
While songs are **crooned**.
But they will not dream of us poor *lads*,
Lost in the **ground**.

Eye rhymes have endings that are spelt alike, and in most cases were pronounced alike at some point in history, but in the course of

time, the words have acquired a different pronunciation. Observe this example from Thomas Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love":

> Come live with me and be my *love,*
>
> And we will all the pleasures *prove*

The rhyme scheme of a poem

It has been pointed out that English rhymes, unlike their Arabic counterparts, do not have to follow each other. This has led to the creation of different patterns of rhyme within the same poem. In order for us to recognize those patterns, we give each rhyme a letter, like 'a' or 'b', and each time the same rhyme occurs in the stanza, the letter is repeated:

I have desired to go	*a*
Where springs not fail,	b
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail	b
And a few lilies blow.	a

A more elaborate rhyme scheme is that of a sonnet. Here is the rhyme scheme of "Sonnet 30" by William Shakespeare:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought	a
I summon up remembrance of things past,	b
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,	a
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:	b
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,	c
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,	d
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,	c
And moan th' expense of many a vanish'd sight;	d
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,	e
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er	f

The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,	e
Which I new pay as if not paid before.	f
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,	g
All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.	g

Strophic Organization of Lines

Reference has already been made to the two different ways of organizing the poetic line known as stichic and strophic organization. This section covers the division of a poem into strophes, that is, more or less, stanzas.

The Petrarchan sonnet has a two-part structure. The first part consists of the first eight lines known as the octave or octet. The second part, consisting of the last six lines, is known as the sestet. This structural division, like any other structural division in poetry, has a meaning value or reflects a certain manner of content organization. Let's see how this happens in one Petrarchan sonnet written by John Milton:

On His Blindness

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
E're half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, least he returning chide,
Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd,
I fondly ask; But patience to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need

Either man's work or his own gifts, who best

Bear his milde yoak, they serve him best, his State

Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed

And post o're Land and Ocean without rest:

They also serve who only stand and waite.

The rhyme scheme (the pattern of the rhyme represented in letters) in this Milton's sonnet "On His Blindness" is abbaabba, cde cde. This rhyme scheme reflects the way the poem is organized formally and at the level of the content as well. A sonnet with this rhyme scheme is expected to reflect that division of form into an octave and a sestet in the content and this is what Milton actually does. Indeed a study of the sonnet form in general is one of the best means by which we understand how strophic organization works in English poetry.

A strophe is roughly a stanza or more accurately a block of lines separated by a white space from the next block. In Milton's poem, there are two strophes, the octave and the sestet. The word strophe is thus more general in meaning than a stanza.

A good poem will exhibit, among other things, the fact that the handling of the content corresponds to the formal division. In this poem Milton begins with the reasons he may complain about his loss of sight. The sestet comes to offer a reply and to relieve the speaker of the burden of having to consider his situation. Milton gives this sonnet form however a particularly personal bite by starting the reply a little earlier, in the second have of the eighth line:

I fondly ask; but patience to prevent

That murmur ....

There are two things to observe here. First there is the volta or the turn which occurs at the second half of last line of the octave and the first of the sestet. And since the second part actually counters or even annuls the first part, the beginning of this foiling move happens a bit earlier than usual, since patience prevents the murmur from continuing. It is as if patience shuts the speaker's mouth before he finishes his sentences.

Thus even the slightest formal change can carry a value for the meaning.

The second point to observe about Milton's practice in the whole poem is his extensive use of enjambment or run-on lines. *Enjambment is the practice by which meaning rides over (continues) from one line to the next.* Traditionally the end of the line marked by a pause accords with a complete meaning unit, like a sentence or a complete phrase. But poets have always found it tempting to foil the reader's expectation. In these temporal aspects of poetry, the temptation becomes very strong. And it is here that one of Milton's quintessential characteristics shows.

The purposes for which a poet may take advantage of the potentials of strophic form are many and can hardly be classified. Understanding what poets do with the formal organization is a matter of 1) being aware of the fact that form is not just a vessel into which to couch one's words and that successful poems will often have some kind of dialectical relation between the form in the content (i.e., the form answers to the content and the content answer to the form somehow);

2) seeing what significance the form has in the ideational and emotional contexts of the poem. Sometimes form can even have an iconic correspondence to the content. See how George Herbert's "Easter Wings" takes the shape of the wings of a bird:

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poore:
With thee
Oh let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.
My tender age in sorrow did beginne:
And still with sicknesses and shame
Thou didst so punish sinne,
That I became
Most thinne.
With thee
Let me combine
And feel this day thy victorie:
For, if I imp my wing on thine
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

Here the poem becomes a painting, an icon, not through its imagery, but through the very way it looks on paper. Most poetry that exhibits the dialectical relation pointed above will make use of the temporal values resulting from the very fact that poetry is a temporal art happening in time. This is what Milton does for instance. He often

causes sense conflict with our expectations about line endings that traditionally mark pauses in the syntax (sentence structure) We become aware of the fact that poetry is bound by time since as we move on to the next line we find that we have to go back to the previous line, construe the sentence in a different way and resume out reading.

Milton also begins the reversal, the counter-argument, earlier than usual. Thus he manages to foil our expectations once again, this time not about line ending but about where the next strophe begins. This would have been a mere trick on our minds of little value in the poem had the murmur not been suddenly cut off by the voice of patience. We as readers tend to like the ingenuity shown by the poet in creating these effects.

One question that such utilization of poetic devices has always given rise to is whether this use is a conscious or unconscious matter. We tend to think that there is something artificial about unconscious use of device, specially in lyric poetry, where a measure of seriousness rather than of playfulness is expected. However, we would expect a good poet to make use of these devices so effortlessly that a sense of naturalness pervades the poem, a sense of the device not being imposed, being in place, that we feel home with it.

The Shakespearean Sonnet

The rhyme scheme of the Shakespearean or English sonnet is abab, cdcd, efef, gg. This four part rhyme scheme corresponds to a four-part formal division in the sonnet: 3 quatrains, each in four line and a final rhyming couplet. As a pre-requisite of the form, a similar division in

the content is necessary if the use of this particular form is to be justified. If no similar division is achieved at the level of the content, the poem is said to fail at least in one respect, that is, formally.

Sonnet 73 observes this rule in a manner that makes it the archetypal English sonnet, with three images of a man dying compared to three phases of natural life, autumn, sunset, dying fire. The brilliant thing about this sonnet is that despite the fact that the three quatrains are variations on the same idea, the poem is not static. We actually realize that that autumn is longer than sunset and that sunset is longer than dying fire. As we move from one stanza to the next, greater urgency attends upon the statements of the speaker. The couplet, rhymed and conclusive either sums up the argument or resolves a crisis built in the poem.

The theme of this poem is the effect of the passage of time on a love relationship. The perspective that the poet chooses to take is a novel one. Love is usually said to suffer as a result of the passage of time or to remain firm in the face of vicissitudes and the passaage of time. Here a consideration of the effect of the passage of time on an individual with the hope it might persuade another individual to take a more positive approach towards the former is advanced. This consideration urged on the poet's friend is encouraged through the use of images and comparisons that require a lot of contemplation. The poet hopes that this contemplation of a few impressive possibilities (particularly that of approaching death) will effect the desired change.

> That time of year thou mayst in me behold
>
> When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang

> Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
>
> Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

The poem opens with a reference to a time of year that is not explicitly mentioned. Only signs accompanying it are given. The signs themselves are all images and the degree of figurativeness in them is high. A decoding of these metaphors is necessary before one can realize the nature of the season. Now it appears that what the poet wants to do is impose a state of profound thinking on the addressee with the hope that the absorption in contemplation will make him love the poet more intensely.

The gradation in the second line, "yellow leaves, or none, or few", seems to carry the addressee and the reader through some sort of puzzle so that at each of these phrases he would consider or reconsider what he has so far been able to decipher. "Those boughs" continues the creation of further obstacles to a facile recognition of the season, since it simply reenacts the similar even more vague phrase of "that time".

A interesting case of ambiguity in this poem occurs between lines three and four, for the lines could be read in two ways; either as having a pause between them which makes the image in line four only parallel the image in line three, or as a continuous unit with "cold" modifying "bare, ruined". This ambiguity as to how to fill the gap between the two lines only adds to the necessity and amount of profound thinking required y the poet of his friend. What the poet requires then is a complete empathy that might lead to sympathy. But this quatrain is not only about thinking or it would have been rather

dry. The sad resignation of "in me", the frailty of "shake against the cold", and the wistfulness of " bare, ruined" as contrasted with only recently defunct singing of the "sweet birds"—all help to create the emotional flesh and blood around the intellectual backbone of the theme of contemplation, so that the fusion of emotional and intellectual elements is almost perfect.

> In me thou seest the twilight of such day
>
> As after sunset fadeth in the west,
>
> Which by and by black night doth take away,
>
> Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

Nearly the same strategies are employed in this quatrain. What strikes us at the beginning is the use of "in me" in contrast with "thou" just as it did in the first quatrain. The speaker accepts the role of the object upon whom the subject is induced to work, a sort of submissiveness that can hardly fail to strike home for the unwilling friend. The day is again defined only in relation to a set of natural phenomena that need to be decoded themselves. Significant here is the fact that three quatrains consist of one sentence as it is necessary for the reader to be carried along the long and involved sentence if the absorption in contemplation and the empathy is to be effected.

The theme of Sonnet 116 is love's strength and endurance in the face of time. Love is steady and time changes.

One clue to dealing with this poem is to examine how Shakespeare builds a pattern of emphasis in it, since the poem offers a number of considerably direct assertions.

Shakespeare begins with a simple statement, emphatic enough. He negates one argument in favour of another: love knows no barriers so long as the lovers are intellectually harmonious and their intentions are true. Shakespeare resorts to the figure of polyptoton which is the repetition of the words love, alter (ation) and remove(r) is a way of emphasizing the difference through similarity. The main vehicle of emphasis in the lines is the accentuation of the word 'not'. There is also to be noticed the preponderance of the sounds n and d. On the whole the consonance, mostly of voiced consonants furthers that emphasis.

The Spenserian sonnet

Spenser used a sonnet form very similar to that of Shakespeare but with two rhymes **fewer**: abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee. This means one rhyme overlaps from one stanza to the next. We would expect some kind of relation to hold between the stanzas while at the same time there should be something to distinguish them since we realize they are still different strophes. This is a complicated principle and it requires great skill of the poet to handle the form effectively. It is true that Spenser was a great poet, but his poetry often lacks ideas and his great talent is invested in imagery and music. The sonnet in any of its varieties requires a measure of intellectual profundity that Spenser's poetry often fails to show.

> One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
> But came the waves and washed it away:
> Again I wrote it with a second hand,
> But came the tide, and made my pains his pray.
> Vain men, said she, that doest in vain assay,

A mortal thing so to immortalize,
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eek my name bee wiped out likewise.
Not so, (quod I) let baser things devise
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens write your glorious name.
Where whenas death shall all the world subdue,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

This poem is easier to access than many of the poems we discuss here or include in the anthology section. One is often surprised at students' admiration of this poem. It is good, however, for a non-native to be able to approach a poem in a foreign language. Taste can later develop as students become more engaged with poetry.

The rhyming couplet in the Shakespearean and Spenserian stanzas and the fact that the syntax in the couplet is convoluted means two things: first, if the poem needs to end on a strong note, rhymed couplet in contrast with the three quatrains achieves that at least at sound level. Second, because the poet needs to deliver an idea within only two lines of twenty syllables which sum up, resolve a problem or reverse an argument introduced in the first twelve lines, the concentration of meaning and the need to rhyme will cause a similar concentration in the syntax. This means we expect more poses and inversions in the couplet than in other lines.

Chapter Three

Language

It is obvious that the language of poetry is different in some ways from the language of practical communication. Far from only conveying a message in the poem, the poet seeks to focus on language in itself, since it is language that makes poetry different as a discourse. But language is a very broad term; it includes everything from figures of speech to alliteration, from syntax to paradox.

We can roughly classify levels of linguistic stratification into the following:

1.imagery and figures of speech

2. syntax and figures of grammar

3. sound and figures of sound.

This chapter examines each of these poetic elements in some detail and gives examples of how English poets make use of them.

Imagery

Imagery is a broader term than figures of speech. In other words, every figure of speech is an image and not vice versa. *An image therefore refers to the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, states of mind and any sensory experience.* An image does not necessarily mean a mental picture, one that we visualize with our brains. J. A. Cuddon, in his *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, distinguishes three types of imagery: the literal, the perceptual and the conceptual.

We can roughly rephrase his divisions as follows:

- the literal image, which does not imply the use of any figures of speech

- the perceptual image, which we can perceive by employing one of our five senses

- the conceptual image, where no sensory perception is addressed or can be used by the reader to understand the image and the reader has to make sense of the image using his intellectual faculty alone.

All three types of imagery can be found in the first quatrain of Shakespeare's Sonnet 73:

> That time of year thou mayst in me behold
> When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
> Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
> Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

The poet wants his friend to see 'autumn in him' to think of him as autumn. This is obviously a conceptual image, since it is neither literal not can be perceived by our senses. This time of year that should be perceived as existing *in* his friend is the time when yellow leaves or few ones or none at all can be found on trees. This is a literal image that takes place in reality in the season referred to. Those yellow leaves are then compared to those parts of churches where the chorus would sing their hymns "bare, ruined choirs". This is a perceptual image since we associate the yellowness of the leaves and the bareness of the boughs with the bare and ruined choirs. This is an image that appeals to our sense of sight. We also have to perceive the comparison between the singing of the birds on the trees and that of the chorus in the choirs which is an auditory image, appealing to our sense of hearing.

Sensory images take different names according to what sense they appeal to:

- visual appealing to sight
- auditory appealing to the hearing
- gustatory appealing to taste
- olfactory appealing to smell
- tactile appealing to touch.

Two other categories may be added: *abstract*, in which the image appeals to the intellect; and *kinaesthetic*, which pertains to the sense of movement and bodily effort.

Such taxonomies (classifications) are important for you to know what to say of a certain image or a whole pattern of imagery that may exist in one or more poems. Classification is an important analytical tool and it necessitates knowledge of the terms needed for description.

Like any other poetic device, an image, a figure of speech or otherwise, is subject to critical judgment on the basis of whether it is merely decorative, a sort of unnecessary embellishment, or whether it does have a function and a role to play in the poem. An image may also be functional but may not be precise, that is, the way it depicts the meaning is not totally justified by the structure of the image, or the tenor and the vehicle of the image do not fit with each other neatly. On the whole, an image for its own sake is a redundancy; an image that has a function makes itself *inevitable* in its position.

Figures of speech include terms like metaphor, personification, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, paradox, irony and several others. It is beyond the scope and the aim of this book to give the definitions and distinctions between those terms. You can refer to a dictionary of literary terms in order to know about the meanings of these terms.

Syntax

Language shares one quality with music, namely, temporality. Language 'happens' in time. A sentence becomes complete in time. A sentence 'happens' little by little. That is why we think of a sentence and language in general as a process. A process takes place, advances towards completion, again, in time.

The one aspect of language that exhibits this important feature is syntax, meaning sentence structure and word order. In English there is a 'normal' word order, but word order can be utilized to reflect different significances in the poem.

Secondly, since a sentence has a 'structure', this structure can be utilized also for different effects. So certain constructions have come to acquire significance in special contexts.

Thirdly, although tense is not strictly speaking an aspect of syntax, but rather of grammar in its broad sense, we may also make mention of it here among those aspects of syntax that can be of significance in the poem.

It is clear that the concept is too abstract at first sight, but the manifestations of syntax in the poetry are very many and for the present writer, represent one of the, if not *the* most, intriguing aspects of poetry. Observe, for instance, the following lines from Alexander Pope where he mocks the affected manners of some men of his day:

> A fop their passion, but their prize a sot
> Alive ridiculous, and dead forgot

We need to observe the array of phrases and elliptical sentences running parallel to each other, so that the line acquires a kind of

mathematical neatness. This effect is mainly a matter of syntax and is given extra force by the use of meter and rhyme.

This kind of parallelism is the main reason for the interesting impact of the following lines of the great Arab poet Al-Mutanabbi:

قليلٌ عائدي، سَقِمٌ فؤادي　　كثيرٌ حاسدي، صعب مرامي

عليلُ الجسمِ ممتنعُ القيام　　شديدُ السُكر من غير المُدامِ

One construction that attentive poets have found alluring to use is that of the relative clause:

I, WITH whose colors Myra dressed her head,

I, that ware posies of her own hand-making,

I, that mine own name in the chimneys read

By Myra finely wrought ere I was waking :

Must I look on, in hope time coming may

With change bring back my turn again to play?

The beauty of the lines rests on this clever utilization of the relative clauses in the first three lines together with the repetition of the personal pronoun. The coupling of 'I' with "that" or "whose" creates the sense of wistful loss.

You may also consider the following extract from Sidney:

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,

That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,

Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,

Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,—

For the most prominent feature of these lines is the parallelism aided by the repetition of one word in final or near-final position in

one clause at the beginning of the next clause, together creating what is known in the study of rhetoric as *gradatio* or ascending structure.

Take for a last example Keats' lines from the La Belle Dame Sans Merci:

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
"I love thee true."

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill's side.

Half the lines in the three stanzas begin with "And" whereas the total number of repetitions is eight. This frequency is not a matter of coincidence, if only because as we read the lines we feel a heavy load being piled up. In other words, there is a an easily felt cumulative effect. Keats means to convey the sense of overwhelming pleasure that the experience with the fairy offered or seemed to promise. And when the last "And" comes in the last of these three stanzas we cannot help expecting more of the same pleasure, but the surprising thing is that this end begins the series of statements that show how deceitful the fairy and how naïve the knight were. That is to say, the use of the last 'and' is ironical.

The value of syntax in the poem is sometimes a matter of its miming or enactment of something outside the poem. This can influence the pace, the structure or the tone of the poem. Here are a few lines from Hopkins' "The Lantern Out of Doors":

> SOMETIMES a lantern moves along the night,
>
> That interests our eyes. And who goes there?
>
> I think; where from and bound, I wonder, where,
>
> With, all down darkness wide, his wading light?

It is the convoluted syntax of the lines that is the first thing to observe. Syntax somehow controls our reading of the poem. It rather manipulates it with its elaborate system of pauses and parallelisms. The 'circumspect' syntax does not follow normal sentence which makes us reach the meaning from the shortest and easiest cut. The syntax here follows the thoughts as the flow from the poet's mind. To be able to say so is to appreciate one important fact about the lines. That itself is important for your analysis.

The lantern is a metaphor for the knowledge and good example of great men who guide us in life which is full of darkness and irrationality. The phrase "And who goes there"? is followed by " I think" which means: I wonder who carries the lantern. "I think" is parenthetical, representing some obstruction of the flow of the sentence and is followed by "where from and bound" and yet another parenthesis "I wonder" and then the word that completes the meaning "were". The last line carries enough syntactic obstacles to convince us of the fact that the syntax carries the non-linear flow of thought in the poet's mind rather than normal word order.

The scope of syntax in poetry cannot be encompassed in these few pages and will have to be understood and appreciated after much reading and observation as well as attention to the teacher's remarks.

Pause

Among the more subtle devices that poets take advantage of in their attempt to manipulate syntax for different rhythmical effects are two devices pertaining to line-ending and different positions within the line itself.

If the meaning in the line accords with the end of the line, we call this line **end-stopped**. In this case marks of punctuation are *usually* assigned to the end of the line:

> Earth, receive an honoured guest;
> William Yeats is laid to rest:
> Let the Irish vessel lie
> Emptied of its poetry.

All the lines from this stanza by Auden are end-stopped. If we consider that the speaker in the poem is issuing a couple of very authoritative commands, we can see the logic of this end-stopping. It gives a sense of firmness and definiteness that reinforces the commanding tone in the lines. You may wonder at the lack of punctuation in line three. When we say that punctuation is *usually* assigned to the final position in end-stopped lines, we don't mean that punctuation must occur if we are to consider the line end-stopped. The pause is there after all, but in English we do not mark off a verb from its complement with any punctuation.

But if the meaning rides on to the next line, then we have ***enjambment.*** Enjambment takes place when the completion of sense

does not accord with line ending, but continues to continue into the next line. In this case the first line is a **run-on line.** This practice gives room for an expression of a more fluid experience. In the following lines, Auden comments on Brughel's painting showing Icarus who tried to fly using wax wings, his son falling into the water with a splash that no one cared for:

In Brueghel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

You may note the different run-on lines here, but the enjambment of the sixth line is of particular importance. "the green" could mean the green land. In that case the line would be end-stopped and the geen would be construed as a noun. But as we move on to the next line, we discover that "green" is only an adjective and that the noun that it qualifies only occurs at the beginning of line seven. We then have to modify our understanding of the meaning of green to be merely an adjective and not a noun meaning 'the green land'.

This represents some kind of game played on us readers and shows how the poet tries to break the linear flow of the line, causing us to move back in order to re-construe green as a different part of speech. This is a source of delight for the reader. The arch practitioner of enjambment in English poetry is Milton. If you go back to the lines

from *Paradise Lost* quoted above or read the whole extract in the anthology you will find that there are hardly any end-stopped lines except when a reasonable completion of the meaning occurs which only happens every several run-on lines, more than ten in some cases.

To say that each of the two practices of end-stopping and enjambment seems to fit with a particular kind of experience does not mean that this is an absolute rule, poets use run-on lines to defeat the readers' expectations and to achieve various rhythmical effects, specially when they take advantage of caesura.

Caesura

When a strong pause in the syntax falls within a line, this is called a caesura. The management of these pauses is important for giving variety and for providing expressive emphasis in the rather long pentameter line. The strong pause at the beginning of the last line in the following extract from Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" "crushes" the readers' expectations about the third line and marks a change of tempo:

The world is charged with grandeur of God.
It will flame out like shining from shook foil
It gathers to a greatness like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod

Sound

Another important element of language is sound. Different words we use to refer to sound are alliteration, assonance, consonance, and dissonance. They all refer to some degree of repetition of different kinds of sound, consonants and vowels in different positions.

Alliteration is the repetition of the first consonant in more than word in the same line in close positions of two successive lines.

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought

I summon remembrance of things past

The use of alliteration as of any other sound device can be divided into three kinds:

- Alliteration used for a pure musical effect, that is, as an embellishment that may make attractive as an array of sounds but adds nothing or little to the line even by way of mere emphasis:

With that I saw two Swannes of goodly hewe
Come softly swimming downe along the Lee;
Two fairer Birds I yet did never see;
The snow, which doth the top of Pindus strew,
Did never whiter shew;

The series of alliterations depending mainly on the sound /s/ seem to be only aimed at a musical effect that fits with the optimistic atmosphere in the poem. It may be said with some reasonability therefore that the alliteration has a function. But the fact that the poem itself lacks any statement and only gives a view of nature where all its objects share in the celebration of high-class girl's marriage leaves the alliteration little function except within this context of general celebration.

- Alliteration which serves for emphasis. Alliteration draws attention to the meaning of alliterated words and foregrounds their meaning, or, in other words, emphasizes their meaning by drawing attention to their

sound. One example of this kind of emphatic alliteration comes from Shakespeare's Sonnet 116:

Let **me** not to the **m**arriage of true **m**inds
Admit impediments.

The alliteration works in unison with the negation to emphasize the poet's rejection of any claim that love can be hampered by obstacles of any kind. There is an insistence in the statement and the repetition of the /m/ consolidates this insistence, hence the emphatic nature of the alliteration.

- Alliteration which has significance for the overall meaning of the line, but also in itself. Take for instance the opening lines from Thomas Wyatt's "Whoso list to hunt":

Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind
But as for me, helas, I may no more

The several repetitions of the /h/ sound imparts a kind of sighing into the lines or gasping that comes with an exhausting chase of the deer. This kind of alliteration creates a meaning of its own, whereas the alliteration in "I may no more" is only emphatic of the negative statement, that the poet is not going to chase the deer any more.

Assonance is the same kind of repetition but at the level of vowels. Assonance can more generally refer to the use of 'same' vowels to create a nice melodic effect. In this case, assonance is also called euphony. Keats was adept at employing assonance as in these lines:

Thou still unravished Bride of quietness
Thou foster child of silence and slow Time

There are two sets of assonantal vowels here the **/I/** set and the **/ai/** set.

Another example comes from Shakespeare's sonnet LV

> NOt marble, nor the g*i*ld*e*d mOnuments
>
> **Of** pr*i*ncess shall **out**l*i*ve th*i*s **pow**erful <u>ri</u>me
>
> But you shall sh<u>i</u>ne more br<u>i</u>ght in these contents
>
> Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.

We use four visual marks to distinguish the patterns of assonance:

1- Capitalization of the letter in bold type: **O**

2- Italicization of the /i/ which written as *I* or *e* as in 'gilded'

3- Bold type only for the /au/ sound

4- Underlining for /ai/ sound

Consonance is the repetition of the same consonant or consonants in the same line or over successive lines. Consonance differs from alliteration in that it does occur at the beginning of a word.

Finally **dissonance** is lack of harmony between consonants, often intentional, and comes from the use of conflicting consonants, that is, consonants which are not very easy to pronounce when they are in company. One example comes from Hopkins's "God's Grandeur":

> Why do men then now not reck his rod

The repetitions of the 'n' are rather difficult to utter with reasonable facility and the effect of someone protesting angrily at another person's behaviour.



Sample Critical Essays

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is one of the most exquisitely written poems by Keats. It is subtitled "a Ballad". But obviously there are several departures from the traditional folk ballad. The distance that separates this 'literary' ballad from the traditional one is that between complexity and simplicity, between sophistication and crudity.

However, this essay does not take so much care of the conventions of the ballad form as of the poem as a poem, as artifice, a way of handling words artistically so that they fit with a certain emotional attitude and a particular subject matter.

The basic situation in the poem is of a knight wandering aimlessly on a cold hillside at a time when hardly any signs of life are visible. The knight's extraordinary outdoor presence couples with a very sad look on his equally pale face. This presence and this state of mind gives occasion to the first speaker to ask the inevitable question of why the knight looks so depressed and why he would go out in such cruel weather. We realize something about the nature of his problems with his very first words:

I met a lady in the meads

We then realize even without reading that it is an unfulfilled love story. The female character however is said to be a fairy not a 'human' lady' but we realize however, that the presence of the fairy is symbolic of a woman and that the whole poem maybe read as a psychological allegory of Keats disappointed love of Fanny Brawne.

The poem, is written in four-line stanzas, also known as quatrains. The dominant meter is iambic tetrameter. The last line is a dimeter.

The poem begins with a trochee. The inversion to a trochee from the iambic or more generally, the inversion of foot at the beginning of line is a common phenomenon in English poetry. It serves to introduce new speakers in the poem or to direct the reader's or listener's attention to something that occurs at the beginning of the poem. If the first speaker wants to alert the knight, to attract his attention to the conversation he is trying to start with him, the first word may have to be stressed. So in this position trochees are frequent.

In the second line we have a last promoted syllable that completes the iambic foot (loiter**ing**). The apostrophe in the word 'wither'd' points to the fact no extra syllable is to be pronounced at the end of the word. The last line is a dimeter. It is also an iam**b** followed by a spondee.

The emphasis here is on the fact the positive aspects of nature that might be keeping the knight on the hill are no longer there since this is winter time. The device is a usual one with Keats; rather than inverting and using strong beats at the beginning of lines, he prefers to keep them for the end of the line. In its brevity the last line carries a decisiveness bringing the experience to a close. It carries some of the most important moments in the poem: "And sure in language strange she said/ I love thee true." The fact of its brevity coupled with its importance makes for some irony. The irony is tragic. It carries a sense of conclusiveness that only turns out to be an illusion with the discoveries the poet makes at the last moments of his encounter with the fairy.

There are many metrical variations that seem not to express or imitate anything rather than the simplicity and natural fluidity of the

conversation. The last line always carries the most important part in the stanza. The fact that the eyes are wild seems to point to the reality that will be discovered later—that the poet will eventually be deceived by the fairy. It actually tells us about the nature of that creature. The same thing is done again in the next stanza where we are told that the song is actually a fairy's song. The next three lines exhibit climactic moments in the couple's relationship: the moaning (a sign of pleasure) the confession by the fairy that she is in love with the man, and the kissing to sleep which exhibits the speaker's loving affection. The stanza after the next one confirms this as it carries the ultimate revelation of the deceiving nature of the fairy and the situation of the speaker.

The poem is perfect in its structure. The division into stanzas which should justify itself in accordance with the progress of the meaning, is accomplished to almost an unimprovable degree. The stanzas advance the action and no stanza seems redundant or lacking in its rationale. The division into stanzas means that the stanzas have to justify their existence and if they do not do that, they are not justified.

The emphasis throughout the poem is on the fact that it is all real. Our knowledge that the speaker is talking about a fairy serves to heighten the tragic nature of the irony. The wistfulness of the experience appears all the more poignantly from phrases like "And sure... I love thee true". The speaker's tragic insistence on the reality of the experience gets further force from the several repetitions of 'and':

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
"I love thee true."
She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.
And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill's side.

The last two lines however put the reality of the experience in doubt. If the dream of the kings and the warriors is the 'latest' dream, what then is the earliest dream? If there is any early dream, it must be that of the story of the knight and the fairy. The cold hillside would then give further cause for contemplation, was he on the cold hillside all the time, even before he has the experience with the fairy (as dream or reality)? In this case the cold hillside acquires greater significance and would impart this significance to other references in the poem. In fact the whole poem titillates between dream or reality. How far then can we regard the fairy as a symbol serving a function similar to that of the nightingale in Keats famous ode. For this is how Keats ends the ode:

> Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
> Fled is that music:--Do I wake or sleep?

God's Grandeur

This is the first sonnet written by Hopkins in his middle period. It starts the sonnet tradition upon which Hopkins' distinction as a major poet was later to rest. Hence, it contains many of the elements that mark the characteristic of Hopkins' verse and his sonnet writing in particular. Only two poems separate this one from his first great work, "The Wreck of the Deutschland" which is also the poem that initialed his mature poetry of the middle and late periods. The latter starts:

Thou mastering me
God! Giver of bread and breath

Thus the first two lines in the middle period exhibit two devices that feature prominently in that period. One of them is the enjambment; the second is the opening which seeks to force the reader into acceptance. Hence, the opening line of God's Grandeur.

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

The line ends with a heavy period. The only verb there is the copula and the line is, a nominal sentence. Consequently it introduces a hard state, though not necessarily a stasis. The line is self-sufficient structurally, an organization that suits Hopkins' intention of having an unquestioning amazed acceptance from the recipient. It is this disarmed reader that Hopkins is going to ask the rhetorical question that only fixes the already established belief of the first line:

Why do men then now not reck his rod?

The use of "will" in the second line bolsters the emphatic mode. Hopkins is careful not to let the emphasis drown in the discursiveness

of the simile, so he separates the two clauses with a comma, a pause that gives the emphasis an independent status. This emphatic statement becomes a fact in the third line.

It will flame out like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness like the ooze of oil.

The 'crushed' repeated "It" points to a calculated effect of monotony with the aim of continuing the venture to make God's omnipresence in the universe a matter of fact, but at the same time very imposing, hence, the strong enjambed line 4 and the rhetorical question.

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod.
And all is seared with trade, bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smell, and shares man's smudge. The soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

The monotony is very clear in line five with the repetition of "have trod'. And despite the grandeur of God's natural world, men insist on ruining this world; the only result is that they are badly affected by being hostile to God's nature. The weary impatience of the critical poet-speaker finds expression in his repeated "and". They give the cumulative effect attendant upon a state of boredom and monotony. This is what Arnold calls the disease of modern life, that has the feet "shod', covered and unable to feel the ground – a dulling of feeling is caused by corruption of the natural in favour of the artificial.

There is an equilibrium between the two quatrains; the enjambment, for instance, appears at the beginning of the last line in

each. More importantly, the central pair of lines in each quatrain has a similar function. Both pairs are statements with a tonality lower than the respective pair of extremes in each quatrain. Moreover, each pair exhibits a similar structure in its two lines.

The meanings are antithetical but structurally the pairs confirm the two facts that inform each quatrain: God's matter of fact presence and glory, and man's destructive works. Finally, the curt "being shod" strikes the reader with a sense of sudden paralysis. This is effected by the segmentation of the line with the two commas which leave the short phrase to the end and with a strong closing period; hence the feeling of sudden paralysis.

The sestet begins with a very strong turn:

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning at the brown brink eastward springs
Because the holy ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with Ah! Bright wings.

These are among the most brilliant lines Hopkins wrote. Surprisingly they are not in the manner of the norm that Hopkins set for himself in his middle period, nor for that matter, of the norm established by the octave. To start with, "And" occurs at the beginning where "but" is more in tune. It derives its importance from the fact that it rings with the two previous initial "Ands". As usual in Hopkins, difference is emphasized through similarity, for "And" marks a sestet starting with a very strong turn from the argument set in the octave; hence, the very cogent irony of "And".

After that the sestet exhibits something very unlike Hopkins – a syntax of subordination against his cherished syntax of coordination. In Hopkins, James Milroy observes, "when main clauses are linked with other clauses, they tend to be linked by coordination rather than subordination". Hopkins recognized two kinds of energy, an abiding one and a transitional one. The first has the mind repeating "the same energy on the same matter", the second is "when one thought or sensation follows another". The abiding energy is characteristic of the paratactic style whether the coordinating conjunction is present or

Is there none such, nowhere known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, lace, latch or catch or key to keep.

....

To keep at bay

Age and age's evils, hoar hair.,

Ruck and wrinkle, drooping, dying, death's worst, winding sheets tombs and worms and tumbling to decay;

(The Leaden Echo)

Coordinators (and, or) abound and disappear, but there remains the paratactic coordination where the coordinated items have equal statuses. Thus "True coordination.. in Hopkins work is found chiefly at the level of the word or phrase, not the clause". "God's Grandeur" however, gives an instance of clause coordination:

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil

And wears man's smudge and shares man smell.

Thus at the linguistic level when "And" occurs in a different syntactic context, it will stand out.

And for all this, nature is never spent

The irony lies in that the recipient on first hearing this last "And", will construe it with the paratactic norm above, but once its new role is revealed, the difference accompanying the turn in the sestet, between the desperate condition of nature in the octave and the confidence that Providence will protect it, is made all the more clinging.

The emphatic negation of "is never" is a happy one and it serves rhythmical and meaning purposes when followed by the next line:

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things

The real subject follows the verb creating a not very strong, but effective chiasmus. The sense conveyed by the two emphatic and chiastic clauses suggests an all-embracing survival of nature as the sense moves from the general "nature" to the specific, "the dearest freshness" offering an exemplification of the general thesis.

The subordination is clear and there is another instance that extends the remaining four lines. But first there is the parallelism of "off the black West went" and at the brown brink eastward, springs" assisted by the alliterations in both phrases.

The principle at work again is difference through similarity as the relation holding between the two clauses is an 'although' relation which points to difference, A transitional energy, "one thought or sensation follows another". The difference is stressed by the introduction of the exclamatory, "Oh" which pulls all the strings to make them converge on "morning' which becomes tremendously

weighty. The indefinite, singular "morning" makes itself an absolute morning. Hopkins makes "at the brown brink eastward" parenthetical whereas its parallel phrase in the pervious line is not. The purpose is not to highlight the former but to make the verb "springs" stand on its own so that it will carry the proper weight to create the intended effect.

Hopkins achieves a very difficult balance; parenthesis is usually emphatic; moreover the phrase forms a parallelism with another one which means that both are instrumental. If Hopkins removes the commas, "springs" will be just a ring in a chain. The insertion of the commas, however, is perfect; it interrupts the flow, making "springs" stand out, and at the same time the phrase remains in the clause to form the parallelism with the above one, asserting the difference of the two lines through the very similarity. Yet another reason for the importance of "springs" compared with its counterpart "went" is that when "went" occurs, it is preceded by two stressed words; "springs", on the other hand, is preceded by an unstressed syllable itself preceded by three stresses. Thus suddenly the lines fall very steeply only to rise sharply with "springs".

The last two lines have one of Hopkins' most exquisite enjambments for it creates a curve, a bend just like the egg-world over which the Holy Ghost is brooding. The interjection is again effective; it prevents the last phrase from being carried adrift by the linear flow of the line, a means by which Hopkins halts the flow and rejects the time-bound nature of language.

This last interruption is a very late attempt to return to the abiding energy. where thoughts do not follow one another, where "the mind...dwells upon, enjoys a single thought". But overall the sestet exhibits one of the finest instances of the working of the other kind of energy.

William Shakespeare
Sonnet 18

Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 is one of his more popular and accessible pieces. The theme of the poem is the durability of love against the transience of some aspects of natural beauty, particularly summer, which is the season of warmth, growth and fertility in Shakespeare's part of the word. Shakespeare would immortalize his friend by means of his poetry. His tone is one of optimism and confidence in the distinction of his poetry and its ability to stand the test of time.

Naturally Shakespearean in design, the sonnet falls into three quatrains and a couplet, with the rhyme scheme abab, cdcd, efef, gg. The sonnet is written in iambic pentameters with several variations.

Shakespeare's ploy at the beginning of the sonnet is to reverse the normal comparison of human, e.g., ladies to the phenomena of the natural world. Women are said to resemble the sun or the moon. In this sonnet, Shakespeare is content to reverse the order while maintaining the basis of the comparison: "Thou art *more lovely* and *more temperate*", Elsewhere, in sonnet 130, Shakespeare rejects the very basis of the comparison:

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun.

The question beginning the sonnet is therefore a rhetorical one to which the speaker gives the answer in the next lines. The natural conclusion of the several comparisons between the excellences of the friend and the inconveniences of summer is that the comparison is granted but the advantage is on the friend's side.

Shakespeare achieves a certain solemnity and sublimity in the first quatrain that endow the lines with a quality of seriousness. This is basically a result of the use of the vowels and consonants:

> Shall I compare thee to a summer's *d*ay?
> Thou Art ***m*ore** lovely and *m*ore temperate
> Rough win***ds*** **do** shake the **d**arling bu***ds*** of May
> And summer's lease hath **all** too short a *d*ate.

This is something that we often encounter in Shakespeare, as in Sonnet 55:

> Not Marble, nor the gilded monuments
> Of princess shall outlive this powerful rhyme
> But you shall shine more bright in these contents
> Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.

"Rough winds" conveys a sense of summer as cruel, specially when it deals its blows to creatures as promising and hopeful as the buds. Shakespeare's mode of writing here is similar to that in other sonnets. He uses bits of folk wisdom and paradox, what may also be called the layman's philosophy, to achieve the subtle effect of the poem. So in the manner of "All the world is a stage", the sage's observation that "Summer's lease hath all too short a date", conveying its transience and the need to pay attention to things more permanent, is in line with the hyperbolic pith of "Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines", and with the paradox of "And every fair from fair declines". The personification of the fifth line falls neatly in place with these statements.

Shakespeare relies heavily on the twin ideas of the changing force of time and the gradual decline of physical beauty under the impact of that force. The change may be accidental or cyclical and, therefore, inevitable, as implied by "By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed". "[F]air from fair" and "nature's changing course untrimmed" suggest this inevitability and there is a note of lamentation in the second of these quotes.

The personifications of the sun in "gold complexion" and of death add a dramatic touch to the poem by juxtaposing his friend with the various signs and forces of cosmic change, where the major support to the friend's "eternal beauty" is the speaker's 'eternal' lines of poetry.

This grandiose and authoritative manner continues in the third quatrain where in the ninth line, the speaker assures his friend that his youth will be immortal. Summer, the very loser in the comparison, is used to indicate the friend's eternal young age and vitality.

The imposing nature of the statement is couched in emphatic rhetoric: "more lovely and more temperate", "do shake the darling buds", "But thy eternal summer shall not fade, Nor lose..., Nor shall death..., So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, So long lives this and this gives life to thee".

Bragging is denied to death only to be claimed by the poet. The witness to the eternality of the speaker's poetry is men's breaths and eyes' sight. This specification is not accidental, for breath plays a role in the physical act of reading as much as eyes do. The emphatic

repetition of "this" in the last line leaves the friend a passive medium through which the poet can work his miracles.

Part of Shakespeare's artistry lies, as can often be observed, in his phrasing, for he manages to avoid monotony in his poetry by the control of word order. The change of the grammatical function of the word and consequently its position in the sentence provides the sonnet with a renewed source of energy. Subject-verb inversion is Shakespeare's main tool: "compare thee", "Thou art"; "eye of heaven shines", "is his"; "summer shall not", "Nor shall Death"; "lives this", "this gives".

The poem as a whole is a triumph of poetic artistry. It also testifies to the fact that Shakespeare was a very conscious artist, fully in control of what he wanted to say and how he can say to achieve the best poetic effect.



Part Two

Anthology

Lord Randal

I

'O WHERE hae ye been, Lord Randal, my son
O where hae ye been, my handsome young man?'—
'I hae been to the wild wood; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

II

'Where gat ye your dinner, Lord Randal, my son?
Where gat ye your dinner, my handsome young man?'—
'I dined wi' my true-love; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

III

'What gat ye to your dinner, Lord Randal, my son?
What gat ye to your dinner, my handsome young man?'—
'I gat eels boil'd in broo'; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

IV

'What became of your bloodhounds, Lord Randal, my son?
What became of your bloodhounds, my handsome young man?'—
'O they swell'd and they died; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

V

'O I fear ye are poison'd, Lord Randal, my son!
O I fear ye are poison'd, my handsome young man!'—
'O yes! I am poison'd; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wald lie down.'

EDWARD, EDWARD

Why dois your brand sae drap wi' bluid,
Edward, Edward?
Why dois your brand sae drap wi' bluid?
And why sae sad gang ye, O?
O, I hae killed my hauke sae guid,

Mither, mither,
O, I hae killed my hauke sae guid,
And I had nae mair bot hee, O.
Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,
Edward, Edward,
Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,
My deir son I tell thee, O.
O, I hae killed my reid-roan steid,
Mither, mither,
O, I hae killed my reid-roan steid,
That erst was sae fair and frie, O.
Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair,
Edward, Edward,
Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair,
Sum other dule ye drie, O.
O, I hae killed my fadir deir,
Mither, mither,
O, I hae killed my fadir deir,
Alas, and wae is mee, O.
And whatten penance wul ye drie for that,
Edward, Edward?
And whatten penance will ye drie for that?
My deir son, now tell me, O.
Ile set my feit in yonder boat,
Mither, mither,
Il set my feit in yonder boat,
And Ile fare ovir the sea, O.
And what wul ye doe wi' your towirs and your ha',
Edward, Edward?
And what wul ye doe wi' your towirs and your ha',
That were sae fair to see, O?
Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa',
Mither, mither,

Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa',
For here nevir mair maun I bee, O.
And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,
Edward, Edward?
And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,
Whan ye gang ovir the sea, O?
The warldis room, late them beg thrae life,
Mither, mither,
The warldis room, let them beg thrae life,
For thame nevir mair wul I see, O.
And what wul ye leive to your ain mither deir,
Edward, Edward?
And what wul ye leive to your ain mither deir?
My deir son, now tell mee, O.
The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,
Mither, mither,
The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,
56 Sic counseils ye gave to me, O.

Notes

4. gang: walk. 5. guid: good. 8. nae mair bot: no more but, none but. 16.erst:formerly. 17. auld: old. 20. "Some other grief you are enduring." 24.wae: woe. 25. Whatten: what kind of. 33. ha': hall. 37. fa': fall. 40. maun: must. 45. The warldis room: the world's large. late: let. thrae: through. 49. ain: own. 53. frae: from. sall: shall. heir: bear. 56. Sic: such.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Sonnet 15

When I consider everything that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment,
That this huge stage presenteth naught but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;

When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheered and check'd even by the selfsame sky,
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory;
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay
To change your day of youth to sullied night;
And all in war with Time for love of you,
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Sonnet 30

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,

And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,
And moan th' expense of many a vanish'd sight;
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.

Sonnet 55

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lover's eyes.

Sonnet 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire

That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

Sad Stories of the Death of Kings (from *Richard III*)

King Richard: Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs;
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth
Let's choose executors and talk of wills:
And yet not so-- for what can we bequeath
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives, and all are Bolingbroke's,
And nothing can we call our own but death,
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.
For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:

How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed;
All murdered for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp.
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchise, be feared, and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit
As if this flesh which walls about our life
Were brass impregnable; and humoured thus
Comes at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king !
Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence: throw away respect,
Tradition, from and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while:
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus,
How can you say to me I am a king?
(Richard II, 111, ii.)

John Donne (1572-1631)

The Canonization

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,
Or chide my palsy, or my gout,
My five grey hairs, or ruin'd fortune flout,
With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,
Take you a course, get you a place,
Observe his Honour, or his Grace,
Or the King's real, or his stamped face
Contemplate, what you will, approve,
So you will let me love.

Alas, alas, who's injur'd by my love?
What merchant's ships have my sighs drown'd?
Who says my tears have overflow'd his ground?
When did my colds a forward spring remove?
When did the heats which my veins fill
Add one more to the plaguy bill?
Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still
Litigious men, which quarrels move,
Though she and I do love.

Call us what you will, we are made such by love;
Call her one, me another fly,
We'are tapers too, and at our own cost die,
And we in us find the'eagle and the dove.
The ph{oe}nix riddle hath more wit
By us; we two being one, are it.
So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit,
We die and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love.

We can die by it, if not live by love,
And if unfit for tombs and hearse
Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;
And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;
As well a well-wrought urn becomes
The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
And by these hymns all shall approve
Us canoniz'd for love;

And thus invoke us: "You, whom reverend love
Made one another's hermitage;
You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;
Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove
Into the glasses of your eyes

(So made such mirrors, and such spies,
That they did all to you epitomize)
Countries, towns, courts: beg from above
A pattern of your love!"

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls, to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
"The breath goes now," and some say, "No:"
So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears;
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refin'd,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;

Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the' other do.

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begun.

Holy Sonnets: Death, be not Proud

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

The Dream

Dear love, for nothing less than thee
Would I have broke this happy dream;
It was a theme
For reason, much too strong for fantasy,
Therefore thou wak'd'st me wisely; yet

My dream thou brok'st not, but continued'st it.
Thou art so true that thoughts of thee suffice
To make dreams truths, and fables histories;
Enter these arms, for since thou thought'st it best,
Not to dream all my dream, let's act the rest.

As lightning, or a taper's light,
Thine eyes, and not thy noise wak'd me;
Yet I thought thee
(For thou lovest truth) an angel, at first sight;
But when I saw thou sawest my heart,
And knew'st my thoughts, beyond an angel's art,
When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when thou knew'st when
Excess of joy would wake me, and cam'st then,
I must confess, it could not choose but be
Profane, to think thee any thing but thee.

Coming and staying show'd thee, thee,
But rising makes me doubt, that now
Thou art not thou.
That love is weak where fear's as strong as he;
'Tis not all spirit, pure and brave,
If mixture it of fear, shame, honour have;
Perchance as torches, which must ready be,
Men light and put out, so thou deal'st with me;
Thou cam'st to kindle, goest to come; then I
Will dream that hope again, but else would die.

The Sun Rising

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide

Late schoolboys, and sour prentices,
Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices,
Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long:
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me
Whether both the'Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear: "All here in one bed lay."

She'is all states, and all princes I,
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,
All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
Thou, sun, art half as happy'as we,
In that the world's contracted thus;
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy sphere.

George Herbert (1593-1633)

The Pulley

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
"Let us," said he, "pour on him all we can;
Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span."

So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure;
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all his treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

"For if I should," said he,
"Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts instead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

"Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast."

Virtue

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky;
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye;
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie;
My music shows ye have your closes,
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like season'd timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

John Milton (1608-1674)

From Paradise Lost

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heav'ns and earth
Rose out of Chaos; or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support,
That to the highth of this great argument
I may assert Eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men.
Say first--for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view,
Nor the deep tract of Hell--say first what cause
Mov'd our grand parents in that happy state,
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off
From their Creator and transgress his will
For one restraint, lords of the world besides?
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?
Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile,
Stirr'd up with envy and revenge, deceiv'd
The Mother of Mankind, what time his pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his host

Of rebel Angels, by whose aid, aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equall'd the Most High,
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God
Rais'd impious war in Heav'n and battle proud,
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.

Thomas Gray (1716-1771)

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
  The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
  And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,
  And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
  And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
  The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
  Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
  Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
  The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
  The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,

No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page

Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,

Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.
For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

"One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,

Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."

The Epitaph

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

William Blake (1757-1827)

London

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,

The mind-forged manacles I hear.
How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appals;
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

John Keats (1795-1821)

On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Ode to a Nightingale

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,--
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,

And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;

The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:--Do I wake or sleep?

Ode on a Grecian Urn

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,--
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Ode to the West Wind

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge

Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystàlline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even

I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said -- "two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert ... near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lips, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,
Look on my Works ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away." --

To a Skylark

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad day-light
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflow'd.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its a{:e}real hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embower'd

In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflower'd,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awaken'd flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Match'd with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest: but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem

Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed--and gazed--but little thought

What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

She Was a Phantom of Delight

She was a Phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely Apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn;
A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.
I saw her upon nearer view,

A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin-liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.
And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:

Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

London

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet the heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

The Solitary Reaper

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,

Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?--
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;--
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

The World Is Too Much With Us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1883)

Break, Break, Break

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.
O, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!
And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!
Break, break, break
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)

Dover Beach

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;--on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar

Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.
Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.
The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Robert Browning (1812-1889)

My Last Duchess

(Ferrara)

That's my last duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
That depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain drawn for you, but I) [10]
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much" or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough [20]
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart - how shall I say? - too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 't was all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace -all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech, [30]
Or blush,at least. She thanked men - good! but thanked
Somehow - I know not how - as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill

In speech - (which I have not) - to make your will
Quite clear to such a one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss
Or there exceed the mark"- and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set [40]
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse
- E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence [50]
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)

Heaven-Haven

A nun takes the veil
I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.
And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge & shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast & with ah! bright wings.

Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things--
  For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
    For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
  Landscape plotted and pieced--fold, fallow, and plough;
    And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
  Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
    With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
                Praise Him.

Spring & Fall

to a young child

Margaret, are you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?

Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Ah! as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By & by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you wíll weep & know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow's springs are the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What héart héard of, ghóst guéssed:
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

A High-Toned Old Christian Woman

Poetry is the supreme fiction, madame.
Take the moral law and make a nave of it
And from the nave build haunted heaven. Thus,
The conscience is converted into palms,
Like windy citherns hankering for hymns.
We agree in principle. That's clear. But take
The opposing law and make a peristyle,
And from the peristyle project a masque
Beyond the planets. Thus, our bawdiness,
Unpurged by epitaph, indulged at last,
Is equally converted into palms,
Squiggling like saxophones. And palm for palm,
Madame, we are where we began. Allow,
Therefore, that in the planetary scene
Your disaffected flagellants, well-stuffed,
Smacking their muzzy bellies in parade,
Proud of such novelties of the sublime,

Such tink and tank and tunk-a-tunk-tunk,
May, merely may, madame, whip from themselves
A jovial hullabaloo among the spheres.
This will make widows wince. But fictive things
Wink as they will. Wink most when widows wince.

T.S Eliot (1888-1965)

Journey of the Magi

'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For the journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.

Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins,
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death,
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

W.H. Auden (1907- 1973)

Musee Des Beaux Arts

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters: how well, they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking
dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot

Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.
In Brueghel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

In Memory of W. B. Yeats

(d. Jan. 1939)

He disappeared in the dead of winter:
The brooks were frozen, the air-ports almost deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues;
The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day.
O all the instruments agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

Far from his illness
The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,
The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays;
By mourning tongues
The death of the poet was kept from his poems.

But for him it was his last afternoon as himself,
An afternoon of nurses and rumours;
The provinces of his body revolted,
The squares of his mind were empty,
Silence invaded the suburbs,
The current of his feeling failed: he became his admirers.

Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections;
To find his happiness in another kind of wood
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience.
The words of a dead man
Are modified in the guts of the living.

But in the importance and noise of to-morrow
When the brokers are roaring like beasts on the floor of the Bourse,
And the poor have the sufferings to which they are fairly accustomed,
And each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom;
A few thousand will think of this day
As one thinks of a day when one did something slightly unusual.

O all the instruments agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

II

You were silly like us: your gift survived it all;
The parish of rich women, physical decay,
Yourself; mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its saying where executives
Would never want to tamper; it flows south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

III

Earth, receive an honoured guest;
William Yeats is laid to rest:
Let the Irish vessel lie
Emptied of its poetry.

Time, that is intolerant
of the brave and innocent,
And indifferent in a week,
To a beautiful physique,
Worships language and forgives
Everyone by whom it lives;
Pardons cowardice, conceit,
Lays its honours at their feet.

Time that with this strange excuse
Pardoned Kipling and his views,
And will pardon Paul Claudel,
Pardons him for writing well.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining Voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

Miss Gee

Let me tell you a little story
 About Miss Edith Gee;
She lived in Clevedon Terrace
 At number 83.

She'd a slight squint in her left eye,
 Her lips they were thin and small,
She had narrow sloping shoulders
 And she had no bust at all.

She'd a velvet hat with trimmings,
 And a dark grey serge costume;
She lived in Clevedon Terrace
 In a small bed-sitting room.

She'd a purple mac for wet days,
 A green umbrella too to take,
She'd a bicycle with shopping basket
 And a harsh back-pedal break.

The Church of Saint Aloysius
 Was not so very far;
She did a lot of knitting,
 Knitting for the Church Bazaar.

Miss Gee looked up at the starlight
 And said, 'Does anyone care
That I live on Clevedon Terrace
 On one hundred pounds a year?'

She dreamed a dream one evening
  That she was the Queen of France
And the Vicar of Saint Aloysius
  Asked Her Majesty to dance.

But a storm blew down the palace,
  She was biking through a field of corn,
And a bull with the face of the Vicar
  Was charging with lowered horn.

She could feel his hot breath behind her,
  He was going to overtake;
And the bicycle went slower and slower
  Because of that back-pedal break.

Summer made the trees a picture,
  Winter made them a wreck;
She bicycled to the evening service
  With her clothes buttoned up to her neck.

She passed by the loving couples,
  She turned her head away;
She passed by the loving couples,
  And they didn't ask her to stay.

Miss Gee sat in the side-aisle,
  She heard the organ play;
And the choir sang so sweetly
  At the ending of the day,

Miss Gee knelt down in the side-aisle,
  She knelt down on her knees;
'Lead me not into temptation
  But make me a good girl, please.'

The days and nights went by her
  Like waves round a Cornish wreck;

She bicycled down to the doctor
  With her clothes buttoned up to her neck.

She bicycled down to the doctor,
  And rang the surgery bell;
'O, doctor, I've a pain inside me,
  And I don't feel very well.'

Doctor Thomas looked her over,
  And then he looked some more;
Walked over to his wash-basin,
  Said,'Why didn't you come before?'

Doctor Thomas sat over his dinner,
  Though his wife was waiting to ring,
Rolling his bread into pellets;
  Said, 'Cancer's a funny thing.

'Nobody knows what the cause is,
  Though some pretend they do;
It's like some hidden assassin
  Waiting to strike at you.

'Childless women get it.
  And men when they retire;
It's as if there had to be some outlet
  For their foiled creative fire.'

His wife she rang for the servent,
  Said, 'Dont be so morbid, dear';
He said: 'I saw Miss Gee this evening
  And she's a goner, I fear.'

They took Miss Gee to the hospital,
  She lay there a total wreck,
Lay in the ward for women
With her bedclothes right up to her neck.

They lay her on the table,
  The students began to laugh;
And Mr. Rose the surgeon
  He cut Miss Gee in half.

Mr. Rose he turned to his students,
  Said, 'Gentlemen if you please,
We seldom see a sarcoma
  As far advanced as this.'

They took her off the table,
  They wheeled away Miss Gee
Down to another department
  Where they study Anatomy.

They hung her from the ceiling
  Yes, they hung up Miss Gee;
And a couple of Oxford Groupers
Carefully dissected her knee.